

of Africa can be certain they will always have a friend and partner in the United States of America.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 a.m. at the National Museum of African Art. In his remarks, he referred to Rear Adm. Tim Ziemer, USN, (Ret.), U.S. Malaria Coordinator; Cristian Samper, Acting Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Chuck Dages, executive vice president, emerging technology, Warner Bros. Home Entertainment Group; President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania; former President Charles Taylor and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; former President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria; and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

### **Remarks on Intelligence Reform Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters**

*February 14, 2008*

**The President.** Good afternoon. This Saturday at midnight, legislation authorizing intelligence professionals to quickly and effectively monitor terrorist communications will expire. If Congress does not act by that time, our ability to find out who the terrorists are talking to, what they are saying, and what they are planning will be compromised. It would be a mistake if the Congress were to allow this to happen.

Members of Congress knew all along that this deadline was approaching. They said it themselves. They've had more than 6 months to discuss and deliberate, and now they must act and pass legislation that will ensure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to keep us safe.

Earlier this week, the Senate did act and passed a strong bill and did so with a bipartisan majority. The Senate bill will ensure that we can effectively monitor those seeking to harm our people. The Senate bill will provide fair and just liability protection for companies that assisted in the efforts to protect America after the attacks of September the 11th. Without this protection, without this liability shield, we may not be able to secure the private sector's cooperation with our in-

telligence efforts. And that, of course, would put the American people at risk.

Now it's the House's turn to act. It is clear that the Senate bill would pass the House with bipartisan support. Republicans and Democrats in the Senate can put partisanship aside and pass a good bill. There's no reason why the House cannot do the same and pass the Senate bill immediately.

Our Government has no greater responsibility than getting this work done, and there really is no excuse for letting this critical legislation expire. I urge congressional leaders to let the will of the House and the American people prevail and vote on the Senate bill before adjourning for their recess. Failure to act would harm our ability to monitor new terrorist activities and could reopen dangerous gaps in our intelligence. Failure to act would also make the private sector less willing to help us protect the country, and this is unacceptable. The House should not leave Washington without passing the Senate bill.

Now, I am scheduled to leave tomorrow for a long-planned trip to five African nations. Moments ago, my staff informed the House leadership that I'm prepared to delay my departure and stay in Washington with them if it will help them complete their work on this critical bill.

The lives of countless Americans depend on our ability to monitor terrorist communications. Our intelligence professionals are working day and night to keep us safe, and they're waiting to see whether Congress will give them the tools they need to succeed or tie their hands by failing to act. The American people are watching this debate as well. They expect Congress to meet its responsibilities before they leave town on a recess.

I'll answer a few questions. Ben [Ben Feller, Associated Press], if you've got a question, I'll be prepared to answer.

### **President's Upcoming Visit to Africa/ Intelligence Reform Legislation**

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President. It appears with that deadline approaching that the House and the White House might be seen as being engaged in a game of chicken here, playing politics with an important intelligence law. If the law expires and something happens, wouldn't you be at least partly to

blame? And on your Africa trip, if you have to delay, do you think that you would be shortening your trip at all?

**The President.** As to the latter, the delay depends on whether the House acts, of course, and they got plenty of time to get this done. But if we have to delay, we'll delay. But I'm going to go to the countries that I said I'd go to.

And to the first case, whether or not this is politics, I certainly hope not. I can assure you, Al Qaida in their planning isn't thinking about politics. They're thinking about hurting the American people again.

Who's to blame? Look, these folks in Congress passed a good bill last—late last summer. In other words, they analyzed the situation; they said there's a threat; and they agreed to give our professionals the tools they needed to do the job. The problem is, they let the bill expire.

My attitude is, if the bill was good enough then, why not pass the bill again? I mean, the threat hasn't gone away. Secondly, they've had plenty of time to think about how to address the issue. Thirdly, the Senate led the way; the Senate showed how to pass a good bill with a bipartisan majority. And the truth of the matter is, if there was a willingness to get this problem solved, all the leadership would have to do is submit the Senate bill for a vote.

So we'll see what happens. My attitude is, now is the time to get the job done. There's been plenty of time to think about it, plenty of time to debate it, and there's a good way forward. And hopefully the House leadership will put this bill for a vote and let the Members vote as they so desire.

Mike [Mike Emmanuel, FOX News].

### ***Terrorist Intelligence Surveillance Program/War on Terror***

**Q.** Mr. President, I realize this is a sensitive matter, but I'm wondering if there's a way you can spell out for the American public what the practical impact may be, if this law expires, on our intelligence professionals, say, next week.

**The President.** Well, I hope it doesn't. But clearly, there will be a gap. And of course, we won't be able to assess that gap until the time. Step one is, I guess you got

to come to the conclusion that there's a threat to America or not a threat. I mean, evidently, some people just don't feel that sense of urgency. I do. And the reason I do is I firmly believe that there's still people out there who would do us harm.

Secondly, I know that the tools that I've just described are necessary to protect us. Why? Because we need to know what people are saying, what they're planning, and what they're thinking. And the tool that I have just described has been very effective.

Thirdly, people are wondering why companies need liability protection. Well, if you co-operate with the Government and then get sued for billions of dollars because of the co-operation, you're less likely to cooperate. And obviously we're going to need people working with us to find out what the enemy is saying and thinking and plotting and planning.

And so it's a—to me, it's a—I guess one way to look at it is, some may not feel that same sense of urgency I do. I heard somebody say, "Well, this is just pure politics." No, this is what is necessary to protect the American people from harm. And I recognize there hasn't been an attack on our country, but that does not mean that there's not still an enemy that lurks, plans, and plots.

And one of the reasons we've been effective is because we put new tools in place that give our professionals that which is necessary to protect us. This is a different kind of threat than we've ever faced before. It's a different kind of war that we're fighting, and it requires a different approach.

Again, I'll repeat to you that the Congress took a look at this issue and decided that the tools were necessary to give to our professionals last—late last summer. And if it was necessary late last summer, why is it not necessary today? What has changed? Well, the threat hasn't gone away. It's still there; it's still real; and we better be worried about it as a nation. And the House has now got time to go out and get the deal done.

Yesterday—a couple of days—votes ago in the Senate made it abundantly clear that Republicans and Democrats can come together and put a good piece of legislation together and get it passed. And the House leadership has an opportunity to do that now.

Listen, thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 3773.

### **Statement on the Third Anniversary of the Death of Former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon**

*February 14, 2008*

Today marks the third anniversary of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. The terrorist attack that killed Prime Minister Hariri, Minister Basil Fuleihan, and many other innocent victims was the spark that launched a transformation in Lebanon, as the Lebanese people demanded an end to the Syrian occupation and the restoration of their sovereignty.

Since the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, many other Lebanese patriots have been murdered by those who seek to use violence and intimidation to derail progress toward a free, independent, and prosperous Lebanon. It is vital that the perpetrators of these attacks be brought to justice, and I, therefore, call upon the international community to redouble its support for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. The United States support for the Government and people of Lebanon remains firm and unwavering.

Syria, Iran, and their allies must end their efforts to undermine Lebanon's legitimate Government and to interfere in its political process. The Lebanese deserve a President elected in accordance with their Constitution, without preconditions and in an environment free from fear and intimidation.

The foundation of freedom in Lebanon, which Mr. Hariri helped lay, remains strong. We will continue to support the people of Lebanon as they work to rid the country of terrorism and violence and exercise their democratic freedoms in peace.

### **Interview With Matt Frei of BBC World News America**

*February 14, 2008*

#### **President's Upcoming Visit to Africa**

**Mr. Frei.** Mr. President, thanks for joining us. You're famous for saying that you don't believe in opinion polls.

**The President.** Yes.

**Mr. Frei.** Do you have any idea how you rate in the countries that you're going to be visiting in Africa?

**The President.** No, sir, I don't.

**Mr. Frei.** Well, I've got news for you, and it's good news. You rate pretty well, sort of in the average 80s. Is that one of the reasons why you're going there? This is one part of the world where you're still very popular.

**The President.** I go where needed. And, no, I'm going there because I've got a firm, heartfelt commitment to the continent of Africa—and had ever since I became President. It's in our interests, national interests that we help people who are suffering from disease and hunger and hopelessness. The only way a radical can recruit is to find somebody that's hopeless. I mean, their vision is, like, really dark and dim.

Plus, I believe to whom much is given, much is required. And America has been given a lot, and it's required of us to help those who suffer. So mine is a mercy—a mission of mercy and a mission of the cold realism of the world in which we live—based upon the realism in the world in which we live.

#### **President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief**

**Mr. Frei.** Your administration has given \$15 billion to treat AIDS in Africa, which is an unprecedented amount of money, and you want to double that amount yet again. This is a huge commitment, and yet the administration and you, personally, don't seem to be getting a lot of credit for it.

**The President.** Yes. You know, this is kind of tied to your first question about polls. Polls are nothing more than just like a poof of air. What matters is results. And ultimately, people will be able to make an objective judgment of a President and his administration and, in this case, a country's commitment.